

## Learners' Attitude, Motivation, and Habit toward Reading in Second Language

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**Abstract.** *The key in language learning and acquisition is exposure towards said language. The most feasible exposure for English learners in the EFL setting is reading due to practicality, continuity, and suitable sources. Their reading success depends on their attitude, motivation, and habit. This research sought to determine the state of learners' attitude, motivation, and habit toward reading in English. This qualitative exploratory research was initiated in 2020, taking place at the State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung (UIN RIL) and the Indonesian State Maritime Polytechnic (Polimarin). The research population was the learners registered in those two universities, with 88 (51.8%) learners from UINR RIL and 82 (48.2%) from Polimarin were selected through quota sampling and took part in this research. A 20 items-questionnaire, complemented by some interview sessions, were used to collect the research data. The collected data were then processed through a model consisting of four stages; data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results revealed that the learners showed a generally favourable attitude toward reading in English. This stemmed from good responses shown from all factors of English reading attitude. It should be noted that the previous reading experience factor was the most unfavourable one due to poor start of reading activity. Meanwhile, the learners showed mixed responses regarding their motivation toward reading in English. Two factors, access to materials and English proficiency, were the ones that need further attention, as most learners still lacked in that regard. Ultimately, the learners' reading habits were still deficient in their native language and even more so in their English reading habits.*

**Key words:** *attitude, habit, motivation, reading, second language.*

### A. INTRODUCTION

The key in language learning and acquisition is exposure towards said language. The more exposure is, the faster one learns or acquires a language (Al-Zoubi, 2018). Talking about exposure will lead us to receptive skills of the language, reading and

listening. While often these skills are losing the spotlight to their receptive counterparts, due to learners' mastery of English often judged based on their speaking and writing, they are by no means lesser. In fact, these receptive skills provide learners with the opportunities to get exposed, examine, and later imitate how to use a language.

As one of the receptive skills, reading is an excellent source of exposure compared to listening (Vidal, 2011); this is due to practicality, continuity, and availability of suitable references. This is especially true for English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners whose environment does not provide adequate listening exposure. In addition, reading boasts its inherent benefits. It opens doors to a world of knowledge and experience that connects people in ways that transcend distance and time. It boosts personal insights to broaden one's horizons and better understand oneself, other people, and the world.

However, not everyone finds reading easy to do, and not everyone sees it as an exciting activity, let alone making it a habit. Those reasons will contribute to the little to no amount of reading done by language learners. In that regard, this research attempts to investigate the attitude, motivation, and habit of reading in English of a group of EFL learners from two universities. The findings of this research are expected to provide insights into these learners' reading and raise awareness about the importance of reading in achieving academic performance. The results would also be helpful as guidance in deciding what to do next to these learners.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***a. Reading***

In its simplest definition, reading is a complex process of obtaining information from written media. However, the word complex in that definition is an understatement. As readers read, various sub-processes happen, both subconscious and conscious, including deciding which reading strategy to use, whether to use a dictionary or not, filtering relevant information from the text, recalling relevant

information from their memory, and assembling both information reach comprehension. An expert provides a similar definition of reading that reading is a complex conscious and unconscious mental process. The reader uses various strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the writer considers intended. (Mikulecky, 2011).

There are several types of reading, two of which are extensive and intensive reading. The former has the objective of obtaining general understanding, while the latter focuses on getting specific comprehension. Various other characteristics are shown between the two types of reading, such as supplementary versus comprehensive, self-selection material versus others recommendation, a large number of reading materials versus a limited amount, without versus with dictionary, for pleasure versus for complete comprehension (Park, 2020). The one commonly applied in teaching EFL learners is intensive reading, while extensive reading is mainly done outside the classroom. It is worth noted that extensive reading holds more potential to sustain learners reading frequency as it is less restrictive than its counterpart. Regardless, both types of reading have their own merits and weaknesses.

### ***b. Attitude toward Reading***

Several experts have tried to provide a conclusive definition of attitude. A relatively recent one stated that attitude reflects evaluations of objects, ranging from positive to negative (Fabrigar et al., 2005). It is similar to another definition that referred to attitude as a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a particular entity by some degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Their broad-scoped definitions of attitude show that it works towards, practically, everything. And this trait differs for every person because it is heavily involved with how one evaluates something. As previously mentioned, attitude can be negative or positive. In our case of reading, a positive attitude is preferable to a negative one. Fortunately, attitude is subject to change, and many factors are influencing it. Thus, investigating

whether one's attitude is positive or negative, and to some extent finding out the responsible aspects of producing such attitude, before finally shaping attitude for the better.

### ***c. Reading Habit***

The end product of a positive attitude and good motivation is the action to do something. Repeated specific actions would then form a habit. It is relevant to the notion that habit is a learned, goal-directed act (Verplanken et al., 2014). They also added that habit does not develop randomly, instead formed by repetitions. Reading habit, therefore, can be seen as the way one's perform his reading. It is noteworthy then that either good or bad habits could occur as a result of repeated reading. It is even more remarkable that how well one's reading depends significantly on how one does his reading, in other words, his habit. Several habits that might be formed in reading include whether one reads fast or slowly, whether one reads out loud or silently, what reading method one is applying, whether one uses a dictionary or not, and how one sees grammar and vocabulary affect his reading (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1996).

## **C. METHOD**

This qualitative exploratory research was initiated in 2020, taking place at the State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung (UIN RIL) and the Indonesian State Maritime Polytechnic (Polimarin). The research population was the learners registered in those two universities. In total, there were 170 learners involved in this research. 88 (51.8%) learners from UIN RIL and 82 (48.2%) from Polimarin were selected through quota sampling and took part in this research.

The instrument used to collect the data for this research was an online questionnaire consisting of 20 items. Four items were constructed to examine learners' attitudes toward reading in L2, with one item for each L2 reading attitude factor. Four items were constructed for their motivation in L2 reading, one item correspondents with each aspect of L2 reading motivation. Finally, there were 12 items which examine

reading habit. These 12 items were taken from the book of (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1996). The questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of the semester in September 2020. The collected data were then analysed qualitatively using a model consisting of four stages of analysis; data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

An additional instrument was also used in the form of an interview. The interview sessions were conducted after questionnaire data had been collected and subsequently analysed. Fifteen learners were purposefully selected for the interview session to confirm their answers and clarify some of the items in the questionnaire (item number 2 and 5).

## **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***4.1. Attitude toward Reading in English***

Upon asked about their L1 reading attitude, almost all learners gave positive responses. The majority of them (72.9%) revealed that they immensely liked the idea of performing reading in Indonesian and an additional 22.9% stated that they liked it. Six learners (3.5%) expressed their dislike toward reading in Indonesian, and there was one learner who said that he immensely disliked reading in Indonesian.

From the results, it is known that the majority of learners showed a favorable attitude toward reading in L1. This is the opposite of the reasonably common research findings in this country that reading is not popular activity to do (Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020). This discrepancy might be because the samples in this research included only university students instead of the whole levels of the learner community. This country has been implementing its '12-years compulsory education. Any learners exceeding the 12-years target must have extra motivation to pursue their education. Good motivation stems from a good attitude (more on that later). This is highly reflected by this research respondents' attitude toward reading, which is key to education.

The next item probed open their experience in performing reading in a foreign or second language and whether they liked it or not. Many learners stated that they have tried reading in a foreign or second language, with 40.6% of them enjoying such experience and 47.6% indicated that they did not enjoy it. The rest of them (11.8%) had never tried reading in other than their L1.

In summary, the learners are split into even halves regarding their experience of reading in L2. A further interview with 15 learners who answered ‘not enjoying the activity’ revealed that the three most common reasons are (1) the reading materials are not attractive, (2) the language is not at their comprehension level, and (3) they do not enjoy reading activity in general. All these three reasons may be the result of a bad start in material selection. This has been highlighted by (Day & Bamford, 1998) in their book, stating that the ‘lure and ladder’ of materials is essential in instilling reading in new readers. The ‘lure’ means the materials are interesting enough, while the ‘ladder’ represents the availability of materials with the appropriate language level.

The next factor contributing to L2 reading attitude is their attitude toward L2 culture and people. This was revealed using the next item. Close to three quarters of learners (74.7%) expressed their interest in English culture, and there were further 18.2% stating that they were highly interested. Only 7.1% of learners showed no interest regarding this matter.

This near-perfect result is a welcome one to this research. It is not unexpected, regardless, as English is one of the famous countries for Indonesian people due to its prominence in everything, the language, the movies, and other aspects. Research has provided supporting proof that Indonesian learners are showing high interest in English culture, which has affected the way they performed their reading (Rodliyah et al., 2014).

This item explores learners' experience in learning English. It was found out that 163 of them (95.9%) had experienced at least one out of three available options of positive language learning environments, while seven learners (4.1%) experienced none of those. Furthermore, it was shown that being taught by excellent or fun teachers came out first as the most experienced aspect of language environments. The second was fun learning activities (61.8%) followed by supportive friends (50.6%).

Indonesian education is constantly learning to provide exciting and rewarding experiences for learners in their learning. Various research has been done investigating which interesting methods or techniques to use, how teachers should behave in the classroom, how to use learner-learner interaction and other applicable variables. These researches have been widely used as references in teaching, and these are reflected on the results of this item that most learners experience at least one positive learning experience in their previous education.

#### ***4.2. Motivation toward Reading in English***

One cannot perform reading without anything to read. Hence, the first item in this session explores whether attractive and easy materials are available for learners to access. The result showed that the number of learners who had the access to such materials and those who did not, were quite even, 54.7% and 45.3% respectively.

Having good access to suitable materials is one of the first steps to sustain reading activity. Almost half of these learners had no access to do so, while further interviews conducted with 15 learners showed that even those who had access to materials, the number of materials were still limited. This underlines the need for a large number of suitable materials for them to keep doing their reading. Several kinds of research also have shown the importance of reading materials availability in bolstering learners' motivation to read, which were conducted by (Azrin, 2017) and (Budihastuti, 2019).

For this item, learners were asked to perform a self-assessment on their English proficiency. Four options were available for them to choose from in the questionnaire, including ‘good, adequate, lacking, and bad’. The majority of them (62.4%) revealed that their proficiency was still in the lacking category. 26.5% considered themselves to have adequate proficiency, and 4.7% opted to choose to have good proficiency. The remaining 6.5% stated that they still had a lot to learn. The result of this item is the most concerning one, reading-wise, with two-third of the learners consider themselves lacking in English proficiency. Along with the exactly previous item, this item provides additional proof that the ‘lure and ladder’ of materials are essential in any reading activities (Day & Bamford, 1998). This also underlines the need for reading materials availability in a wide range, especially concerning the language difficulty used in the materials.

This item is the L2 counterpart of the very first item discussed previously. It investigates learners’ fondness for reading in English. The result showed a decreased number of those who declared ‘extremely liking’ and ‘liking’ and an increased number of ‘disliking’ and ‘extremely disliking’ toward reading in English compared to reading in Indonesian. Regardless, 70% of them liked the idea of reading in English, and further 2.9% immensely enjoyed it. 25.9% and 1.2% of learners disliked and immensely disliked reading in English, respectively.

There was an understandably reduced number of learners expressing their favourable attitude toward reading in L2 than in L1. It cannot be stressed enough that unavailability of suitable materials and lack of English proficiency were the main reasons for this reduced number of learners. Then again, it is pretty impossible for attitude toward reading in L2 to be higher than attitude toward reading in L1 as the former has more requirements to meet than the latter.

This item discusses the learner’s sociocultural environment toward reading activity, whether the environment is supportive or against the reading activity. A total of 71.8% of learners revealed that their environment was either supportive or very



supportive in providing opportunities for them to read. The rest (28.2%) indicated that they were not as lucky as their other friends, with the environment was not-supportive of reading activity.

It is pretty clear that learners' motivation towards reading, both in L1 and L2, is greatly affected by their environment, as proven by several types of research (Ulla et al., 2020) and (Abu-Rabia & Yaari, 2012). Both types of research provided in-depth analysis on this matter. The effect of the sociocultural environment is so significant that learners with high motivation might end up not performing reading in L2 when their environment is not supportive. In contrast, those with low motivation would read in L2 when a supportive environment surrounds them.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

In general, the learners showed a favourable attitude toward reading in English. This stems from good responses shown from all factors of English reading attitude. It should be noted that the English reading experience factor is the most unfavourable one due to poor start of reading activity. However, the factor can still be considered good, with less than half of the learners showing adverse responses. Meanwhile, the learners showed mixed reactions regarding their motivation toward reading in English. Two factors, access to materials and English proficiency, are the ones that need further attention, as most learners still lack in that regard. Ultimately, the learners L1 reading habit need some reworks, and even more so in their English reading habit.

Improving attitude and motivation are believed to improve reading habits. Considering this research result, searching for ways to enhance attitude and motivation can be considered for future research. Analysing the extent to which one variable affects, correlates, or interacts with other variables should follow suit. That said, extensive reading, which puts forward the importance of selecting easy and exciting material as the basis for reading, is a worthy attempt to improve the learners reading for the better.

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